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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000671

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR BNEULING  
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR C. COURVELLE, D. TEITELBAUM  
USDOC FOR ROBERT TELCHIN, TREASURY FOR OREN WYCHE-SHAW,  
PASS USTR FOR FLORIZELLE LISER, STATE PASS USAID FOR  
MARJORIE COPSON, US MISSION GENEVA FOR JOHN CHAMBERLIN,  
USDOL FOR ROBERT YOUNG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/31/2009

TAGS: [ELAB](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [Z1](#) [ZCTU](#)

SUBJECT: ZCTU CELEBRATES MAY DAY UNDER THREAT

REF: HARARE 617

Classified By: Ambassador Christopher Dell for reason 1.4 d

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Summary  
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1. (C) In their respective May Day campaigns, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) focused on poverty and taxes, while the GOZ-sponsored Zimbabwe Federation of Trade Unions (ZFTU) accused employers of purposefully causing shortages of basic commodities to stir civil unrest. Even as the ZCTU General Council voted down a proposal by four renegade union leaders to change the ZCTU leadership, ZCTU Secretary General Wellington Chibebe expressed fears that the GOZ may arrest the entire leadership prior to the June ILO meeting in Geneva. Meanwhile, the GOZ continues its attacks on the ZCTU, with 12 activists arrested in the week preceding May Day and continued GOZ-controlled newspaper articles calling for leadership change at the ZCTU.

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May Day Celebrations  
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2. (C) In a May 2 conversation with EconOff, Chibebe called the ZCTU May Day rallies a success, with an estimated 10-15,000 attendees in Harare, 2000 in Bulawayo, and smaller numbers in other towns throughout the country. Chibebe also said that the crowd in Mutare shouted down renegade leaders of four unions attempting to change the ZCTU leadership (Ref A). According to Chibebe, ZCTU speakers focused on raising wages above the poverty datum line (PDL), shifting tax brackets to ensure those earning under the PDL paid no taxes, and on GOZ accountability for AIDS levies and other levies on salaries. In Bulawayo, he said Progressive Teachers, Union of Zimbabwe General Secretary Raymond Majongwe had led the rally and had denounced GOZ attempts to change ZCTU leadership and had called upon workers to focus on real issues and not GOZ gimmicks.

3. (C) According to press reports, during the much smaller rival ZFTU May Day campaigns, President Alfred Makwarimba called for the GOZ to arrest anyone selling goods above gazetted prices, to exclude wage increases from inflation calculations, and to ask workers to inform on employers engaging in sabotage or hoarding to purposefully create shortages. In a particularly Orwellian statement quoted verbatim by the official Herald newspaper, he asked the GOZ to &educate the nation (on) the meaning of the decline in the inflation rate vis--vis the escalating cost of goods and services in order for the workers to observe and appreciate the incremental improvements in their lives.<sup>8</sup> (N.B. May Day was the first mention of the ZFTU -- a largely failed GOZ attempt to weaken ZCTU -- in the GOZ-controlled press since the fall of ZFTU Vice-President Joseph Chinotimba in the December 2004 Tsholotsho debacle.)

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GOZ Continues ZCTU Crackdown  
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4. (C) Although no ZCTU activists were arrested on May Day, ZCTU Information Officer Mlamleli Sibanda confirmed press reports that Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) arrested twelve ZCTU activists in the preceding week. Six ZCTU officials were arrested in Mutare on April 27 under the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) and later released. (N.B. The ZCTU is explicitly exempted from POSA.) In Harare on April 28, six additional ZCTU activists were arrested and later released while commemorating World Day for Safety and Health at Work in a downtown Harare rally with public sector workers.

5. (C) On April 23, according to Majongwe, a strong majority of the ZCTU General Council voted down a resolution from four renegade union leaders to change the ZCTU leadership (Ref A). Nonetheless, he confirmed that an internal ZCTU investigation is continuing into the renegade leaders,

financial and other allegations. In addition, GOZ-controlled newspapers continued their call for workers to &reclaim the ZCTU from the political malcontents who hijacked it<sup>8</sup> and to seek &sincere leaders who are truly committed to improving the welfare of the workers . . . and not just wage a pointless defiance campaign that only worsens the plight of workers.<sup>8</sup>

16. (C) On May 5, Chibebe told EconOff that he feared that a Labor Ministry investigation could lead to the arrest of the entire ZCTU leadership and GOZ-imposed new leaders prior to the June ILO convention in Geneva. He also asserted that the Chinese were funding the renegade unions as a favor to the GOZ.

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COMMENT  
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17. (C) Although this year,s celebrations were smaller than in the past, the ZCTU,s ability to put on large-scale events in the current climate of post-election repression can still be considered a success. Moreover, the failure of renegade unions to garner support from the General Council or the crowd in Mutare also bodes well for the current ZCTU leadership. Nonetheless, Chibebe,s fears may not be misplaced. The GOZ is continuing its anti-ZCTU efforts and financial and other allegations by the renegade unions could still provide the ammunition the Labor Ministry needs to interfere in internal ZCTU affairs. We are especially concerned that former Minister for State Security Nicholas Goche has been given the Labor portfolio in his new capacity as Minister for Public Service, Labor, and Social Welfare at a time when the GOZ is clearly targeting one of the few remaining independent mass-based organizations in Zimbabwe.

DELL